Acupuncture for Hormone Therapy Pain

For women taking hormone therapy for breast cancer, acupuncture can help manage pain and stiffness.

June 18, 2018 By Liz Highleyman

Acupuncture can help manage joint pain and stiffness in women taking hormone therapy for breast cancer, according to study results presented at the 2017 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium.

Aromatase inhibitors, which interfere with the production of estrogen, can slow breast cancer growth and prevent recurrence, but they can also cause side effects, including joint pain, muscle aches, hot flashes and bone loss.

Dawn Hershman, MD, of the Herbert Irving Comprehensive Cancer Center in New York reported results from a randomized trial showing that women who received true acupuncture using traditional Chinese medicine techniques had significantly more pain relief than those who received "sham" acupuncture. Nearly 60 percent of women in the first group had at least a two-point reduction in their worst pain scores.

"We hope that these data will not only encourage health care practitioners to discuss acupuncture as a complementary therapy for patients receiving aromatase inhibitors but that they will also enhance payers' willingness to reimburse these patients for acupuncture," Hershman says.

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